



FRIDAY
March 20, 2020

StarTribune

31° 18°
Sunny, the coldest day
for a while. **B6**

2019 LOCAL NEWS



PULITZER FINALIST

11K+ U.S. CASES

Number doubles in 2 days,
expected to accelerate.

TRANSIT CUTS

Fewer buses; steps taken
to keep riders safely apart.

MPLS. DECREE

City's emergency extended,
vulnerable made priority.

NO VISITORS

Hospitals try to bar virus
by setting new restrictions.

GOP plan: \$1,200 checks

By JILL COLVIN and DEB
RIECHMANN • Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Insisting the federal government is not a "shipping clerk," President Donald Trump on Thursday called on states to do more to secure their own critically needed masks, ventilators and testing supplies as the pressure mounted on hospitals struggling to cope with a rising number of coronavirus

patients.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., released a massive economic stimulus bill Thursday to fight the coronavirus' fallout, even as opposition emerged from some key Republicans to one of the central elements of the plan — direct cash payments to many Americans.

Some conservatives expressed opposition to these cash payments entirely, while

others warned that GOP leaders were effectively penalizing low-income households by the way they had designed the plan.

Trump has expressed support for the cash-payment approach in recent days, but he has also shifted between numerous ideas amid waves of opposition.

McConnell unveiled the trillion-dollar stimulus plan that would be the starting

point for negotiations with Democrats. McConnell called for those talks to start Friday, and senators said the situation was so dire that they should not recess until they have reached a deal to pass it.

"We are facing the abyss," said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla. "We are facing circumstances for which there is no playbook."

The centerpiece of the Senate GOP plan would be hundreds of billions of dollars

sent to Americans in the form of checks as a way to flood the country with money in an effort to blunt the dramatic pullback of spending that has resulted from the coronavirus outbreak.

The legislation would provide checks of \$1,200 per adult for many families, as well as \$500 for every child in those families. Families filing jointly would receive up to \$2,400 for the adults.

The size of the checks would diminish for those earning more than \$75,000 and phase out completely for those earning more than \$99,000. The poorest families, those with no federal income tax liability, would see smaller benefits, though the minimum would be set at \$600.

An early analysis showed the vast majority of middle-class people would receive
See **VIRUS** on A4 ►

Elective surgeries halted by governor

By GLENN HOWATT
glenn.howatt@startribune.com

Gov. Tim Walz has ordered hospitals to postpone elective surgeries because of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, a move that is designed to conserve resources as well as protect patients and caregivers.

Some health care systems, including the four largest in the state, have already begun pulling back on elective surgeries. Earlier this week, the Minnesota Hospital Association asked the governor to issue an order to make the practice standard across the state.

"We want to make sure that everybody that uses masks and gloves and personal protective equipment takes action now in a coordinated manner," said Dr. Rahul Koranne, chief executive of the hospital group. "This is something that needed to be done."

The move comes as 12 more cases of COVID-19 were confirmed by laboratory tests and announced Thursday, bringing the total number of known cases in the state to 89.

Although four people are hospitalized, including one in critical condition, 24 people have recovered, according to
See **MINNESOTA** on A5 ►



DAVID JOLIS • david.jolis@startribune.com

EARLY SHOPPER: Merlin Smith, 82, of Edina navigated the aisles of Lunds and Byerlys on Thursday during an early morning hour devoted to older shoppers and those with health conditions. Some grocery stores are hiking workers' pay. **D1**

Rural blowback to Walz's business closures

By TOREY VAN OOT
torey.vanoot@startribune.com

Republicans who control the Minnesota Senate pushed back Thursday against some of Gov. Tim Walz's executive orders that aim to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka said Walz's decision to change unemployment rules without legislative approval "does not appear to pass constitutional

standard." Other Republicans questioned the need for blanket closings of restaurants and other businesses, saying it could do grave economic harm in rural areas that so far have been little touched by COVID-19.

"While we understand the necessity of Governor Walz to lead in this time of crisis, that leadership should not be unilateral and unchecked," Gazelka said in a statement.

Gazelka's statement came

amid growing signs of GOP discontent with Walz's previous executive orders temporarily closing bars, restaurants and other businesses. It also comes as the administration mulls new safety measures, including requiring Minnesotans to shelter in place.

Several lawmakers, all Republicans, have expressed concerns about the impact of Walz's orders on small

See **GOP** on A8 ►

'Crimson contagion'
Before virus outbreak, a cascade of warnings. **A4**

Special treatment
VIPs skip to front of the line for testing. **A8**

Insider benefits?
Senators downplayed virus, but sold stocks. **A4**

Singer takes test
Messersmith recounts his experience. **E1**

Self-employed reel as shutdown shock waves hit

By JOHN EWOLDT
and NICOLE NORFLEET
Star Tribune staff writers

Freelancing and self-employment is like riding a wave as projects and jobs come and go. In the past week, the wave crashed as never before on millions of Americans.

Many Minnesotans who make a living on their own are now floating around in shock. "You ride the wave. You have

some months where you are busy and some months where you are not," says Kelsey Shaw, who left a job at a marketing agency a year ago to become a freelancer who businesses hire to help them navigate social media and events.

"This is one of those months," Shaw said. "However long this tunnel is I'm hoping to see the light."

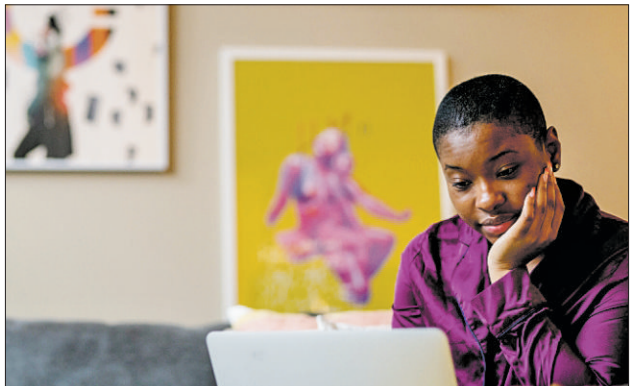
Freelancers, independent contractors, gig workers,

"solopreneurs" and salespeople relying on commission have been the first to lose opportunities and income by decisions to close down large portions of the U.S. economy to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

Nearly 1 in 5 Americans work full time in such jobs, a figure that grew about 50% in the decade after the 2008 recession, federal jobs data shows. Another 10% of Amer-

ican workers get a second income by doing contract or gig work part time.

These jobs can be lucrative in good times and give workers a lot of control and flexibility in their lives. But when downturns come, they feel the pain first. Many independent workers are also on their own for employer benefits such as life and health insurance. Sick pay, for most, is no pay.
See **JOBS** on A8 ►



JERRY HOLT • jerry.holt@startribune.com

"[Cancellations] became a domino effect," said Precious Wallace, a freelance graphic designer. "It put everything on hold."

TOP NEWS

EX-MAYO STAFFER HELD IN ISIS CASE

He was arrested at MSP, accused of trying to go to Syria to fight "on the front line." **B1**



NATION + WORLD

Protest convoy in Israel: Hundreds call Netanyahu's moves undemocratic. **A2**

Progressive disconnect: Political revolution is popular in theory, not at polls. **A3**

MINNESOTA

Deputy cleared: Washington Co. officer found not guilty in shooting death. **B1**

Tow truck crackdown: Fed up, Savage will begin licensing companies. **B1**

SPORTS

Wolves not tested: Nine NBA players positive, but none were recent foes. **C1**

Twins' big plans hit wall: Offseason hopes frozen in uncertainty. **C1**

BUSINESS

Groceries bump up pay: Cub, Kowalski's, others give raises to hourly workers. **D1**

Medical workers go remote: But companies' efforts in fits and starts. **D1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?

5-pound bear cubs rescued Up North: The pair's mother was hit by a combine; the cubs will be released next spring. **B3**

More of what matters to Minnesota. All day. Every day.

ONLINE: startribune.com • TIPS: 612-673-4414 • COMMENTS: 612-673-4000
SUBSCRIPTIONS: Call 612-673-4343 or go to startribune.com/subscribe

STAR TRIBUNE
Minneapolis, St. Paul MN
Volume XXXVIII • No. 351
March 20, 2020